

The *Chinquapin* is published quarterly by the The Royal Oak Nature Society, a volunteer group working to protect and promote Royal Oak's nature preserves, while enjoying and sharing environmental education with the community.

The *Chinquapin* is a type of white oak also known as a *yellow chestnut oak*. We chose to name the newsletter after the *Chinquapin* oak we have located in Cummingston Park. *Colleen Hilzinger*, artist and member created the beautiful oak tree logo.

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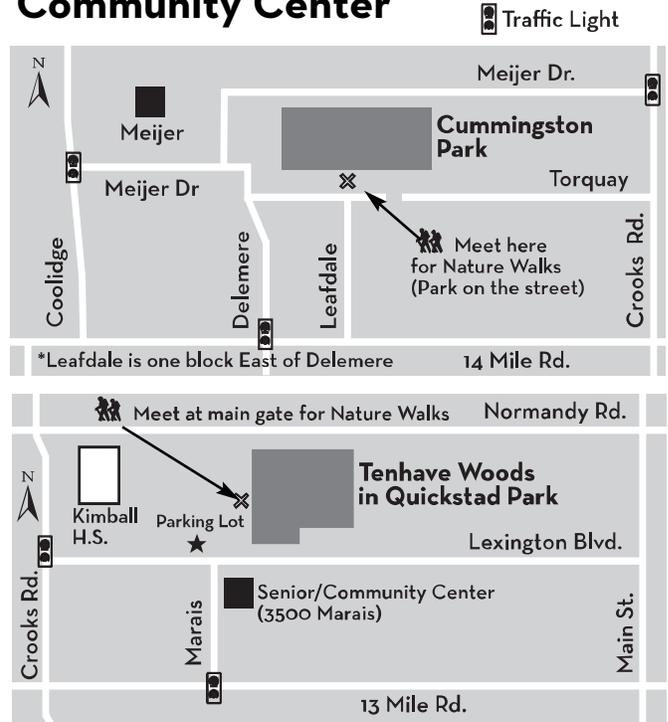
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# THE Chinquapin

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SUMMER 2004

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY

## VICE PRESIDENT

The Royal Oak Nature Society is looking for someone to run our monthly board meetings in case the President is unable to attend. At other times, the Vice President will record the board meeting minutes and have a copy of the Nature Society's bylaws always on hand. The Vice President will write up the minutes, type them up and e-mail them to all of the board members. If you are interested and would like further information, please contact Heather Muller at 248-442-6718.

## BOARD MEMBERS

Royal Oak Nature Society Board Member elections took place at the beginning of the February 4th 2004 General Meeting/Speaker Program. The board member term covers the period from Feb. 04 - Jan. 05. Presently, the Vice President position is the only one that is not filled. You will find the current board members along with their phone numbers listed on the back page of this newsletter and if you want to e-mail them, please go to our web site and link on to *Get Involved* or *Contacts*.

## Nature Nights BY KRISTINE HAMMOND



**Interested students listen to scouts talk about the ages of trees.**

The Education Committee has been busy this year hosting two Nature Nights. The first was held at Shrine Grade School on January 23rd. Despite the cold weather and snow, nearly 150 parents and students attended. The evening began at 6:30, with nearly a dozen different exhibits and activities set up in the gym and cafeteria. Anna Collinson, Recycling Coordinator for the City of Royal Oak, was present with her worm-composting bin and recycling information, as well as Dena Serrato, with composting information from SOCCRA. English Gardens provided seeds, soils, and pots for each child to take home a plant. Flymart Flyshop, on Main Street in

Royal Oak, held a fly tying workshop, where children could take home a fly they created themselves. Bob Muller, from the Nature Society, had a wonderful display of animal skulls, and Scouts from Troop 1627 were in attendance with tree rings. Children could also try out their bird identification skills with pictures and recordings of birds commonly found in Royal Oak. John Topor brought a large display of fossils for viewing, as well as small fossils for children to bring home.

After having a chance to view some of the exhibits, everyone gathered in the gym at 7:15 for a presentation from the Organization for Bat Conservation.

*continued on page 4*

# Screech Owls BY ANN WILLIAMS

## Keep an eye and ear out for these beautiful raptors

In the corner of my eye I thought I saw a bunny next to a tree in our yard. I didn't think much of it until I returned hours later seeing the bunny in the same exact place. I walked over and there, rolled into a ball was a young Screech Owl. I stepped just a bit closer and it raised its head stretched out its wings, widened its brilliant eyes, hissed and snapped its beak at me! Its feathers were so beautiful they looked like rabbit fur but on closer examination, the intricate browns, grays, whites and blacks were feathers.

I knew to keep my distance. I looked up in the tree and there were three more staring down at me.

Excited, I immediately called Royal Oak Animal Shelter. They sent a bird handler out who was very gentle and used gloves to put the bird gently into a box. He would take the bird back to the shelter, rehabilitate the bird and hopefully send it back into the wild. For the rest

of the afternoon I kept my eye out for the other little ones and for the parents who were probably close by. I never found out if the owl survived its tumble and rehabilitation.



I hadn't seen an owl since. Then, last summer I was walking with my son and I looked up in the tree and saw an owl sitting on a thick branch looking down at us. I wondered if it was the same owl or one of its siblings.

The Eastern Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) is fairly common in Michigan. They are about twice the size of a man's fist, around 8 inches tall, and are pretty fierce hunters and defenders of their nest sites. They will

swoop at people to drive them away from a nest.

Screech owls are considered the most strictly nocturnal of all North American owls and are more often heard than seen. Common to open woodlands and clearings, they are often found in parks and suburban yards. They spend the day in tree cavities. They emerge after dark to hunt. Their diets include large insects, small terrestrial mammals, reptiles, amphibians, bats, spiders, scorpions, snails, earthworms and small fish.

They will nest in specially designed owl boxes, especially if the bottom is covered in 2 or 3 inches of sawdust. Boxes should be 15-20 feet off the ground and be about 9 inches wide, 12 inches deep and 16 inches high. A hole 3 inches in diameter should be cut in the front center of the box about 11 inches from the bottom.

Screech owls can be attracted to a yard by planting flowers that



bloom at night to attract insects.

It is always best for any young birds to be with their parents during their weaning days to adulthood. If you find a baby bird and are not sure what to do, requests for Animal Control should be made to the Royal Oak Police Department by calling: 248-246-3500.

### Owl Facts

**Wingspan:** 20-22 in.

**Common Names:** quavering owl, trilling owl, whistling owl, demon owl

**Flight:** Rapid steady wing beats with occasional brief glides.

**Voice:** The two primary sounds are a whinny (or tremolo whistle) and a "bouncing" trill. Screech owls are also famous for the loud screech they will make in defense when attacked.

**Folk lore:** Among early English folk cures, owls' eggs, cooked until they turned into ashes, were used as a potion to improve eyesight.

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### Thank You to Our Sponsor

The Royal Oak Nature Society would like to thank Staples located in Clawson Center for their support. Staples supplies us with the paper for printing our newsletter.

# Surveys & Projects

BY BOB MULLER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The following are Nature Society surveys & projects that are currently ongoing or will be started up in the near future. If you are interested in becoming involved in any of those mentioned below, please contact Bob Muller through our web site: [www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/nature](http://www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/nature) or call 248-246-3380.

**Flora Survey:** Don & Joyce Drife have re-found most of the plants surveyed in the 1970's and have added many that had been missed. Additional help would be welcomed. We would be very interested in finding someone with expertise in grasses, sedges and mosses.

**Insect Survey:** Robert Lawshe is in the process of setting up an insect survey for us. These will be done at night with bright lights to attract the insects. Times & dates will be posted on our web site for those interested in getting involved.

**Fungus Survey:** Diane Pruden has agreed to develop a fungus survey. She will help lead the September 25th nature walk, looking to identify any fungus that can be found and possibly gather some edible ones to be cooked.

**Mammal Survey:** Anyone who might be interested in starting up a mammal survey should get in touch with us.

**Pre-settlement Land Project:** This project is attempting to gather enough data to determine the pre-settlement condition of Royal Oak. This involves researching the

old river and stream courses, glacial beaches, and a survey of every old growth forest tree in the city. This information along with property lines, old river and stream beds, springs, etc, from old 1800's survey maps will be combined and made into new maps. These new maps will give us a better understanding of the land of Royal Oak.

General surveys of Royal Oak's riverbeds and areas containing old forest growth trees (11.4% of the city) in the city have both been completed. This past winter a survey of the old glacial beaches was begun. A detail survey of each tree with in these areas has been started but many volunteers are needed. This project will take years to complete, but clock is ticking. Hundred-year-old oaks are dying every year, homeowners cut down trees and the emerald ash borer is eliminating ash trees before we can document them. An in-depth survey of the makeup of the forest groups within Tenhave Woods also needs to be started. If you are a good at tree identification skills and would like to work on the areas in Royal Oak, please contact us.

## **Goodwin Family History Project:**

We are currently looking into the history of the people that have owned the land that Tenhave Woods occupies. Mary Kliess is heading up this effort. We need more people with an interest in genealogy to help with the research. We have determined that Tenhave Woods is the wood lot of the Samuel Goodwin farm. The Goodwin's are original settlers of Royal Oak, coming here in 1824.

We need to discover more about the Goodwins and nothing is known about who owned the land between 1872 and when the city received the land in the 1940's.

It is important to know the human history of our nature parks. In the future we would also like to study the human history of Cummingston Park.

Anyone with an interest in nature is welcome and encouraged to discover and report new things from our parks. If you enjoy searching the woods for plants or animals or you have a special area of interest and would like to become more involved with the Nature Society, please contact us.



## **SPEAKER PROGRAM NOTE**

Beginning with the September 2004 General Meeting/Speaker Program, the new starting time will be 7:30 p.m. instead of 7:00 p.m. as it was in the past. That will allow everyone extra time to get the Senior Center before the general meeting/speaker program begins.

## **PARK PROBLEMS**

If you are near or in one of our two nature parks and see or hear suspicious or unlawful behavior, please call the Royal Oak Police Department's non-emergency number, 248-246-3500 and inform them of the problem.

**ALL SPEAKER PROGRAMS AND NATURE WALKS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO EVERYONE.  
PRE-REGISTRATION IS NOT REQUIRED.**

**“Preserving Urban Habitat, Wildlife and Activism”**

June 2nd 🦌 Lon Ullmann, President of the Troy Wetlands Coalition. Deer herds, turkeys, endangered animals and plants can still be found in some city of Troy backyards. Many people would like to see them gone, especially the developers who have money and power. The only way to save what is left is through activism and citizen involvement. You may win, you may lose, but it's the only way to save what's left. Come hear about Lon's struggles to help protect the natural life that still remains in Troy.

**General Meeting with Speaker Programs**

Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. – Leo Mahany/Harold Meininger Senior/Community Center (3500 Marais)

Date	Speaker(s)	Program
June 2nd	Lon Ullmann, President of the Troy Wetlands Coalition.	<i>Preserving Urban Habitat, Wildlife and Activism</i>
Sept. 1st	Diane Pruden	<i>Mushrooms</i>

**NOTE: June General Meeting/Speaker Program still begins at 7:00 p.m., but the September program will begin a half hour later (7:30 p.m.)**

**Nature Walk Programs Meet at the park**

Date	Day	Time	Location	Theme
June 5th	Saturday	10:00 a.m.	Tenhave Woods	Late Spring
July 21st	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Tenhave Woods	Early Summer
Aug. 18th	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Cummingston Park	Late Summer

NATURE NIGHTS continued from page 1

Students at Shrine Grade School are involved in the JASON Project, and this year's theme was Rain Forests. Some of the bats brought in were from rain forests, and some were bats found right here in Michigan. After the presentation on bats, students were able to visit



children all night. Once again, we had seed planting, arts and crafts, skulls, tree rings, fossils, and information about recycling and composting.

We would like to thank Shrine Grade School and Starr Elementary for inviting us to come into their schools with our program, as well



the exhibits once again. Nancy Vickers kept many busy with her bat-related coloring crafts. One of the most popular exhibits were the reptiles brought by Dan Brier, from the Little Creatures Company. At the end of the evening, we held a raffle with prizes donated from local businesses. Prizes included a

junk food basket from Pronto!, a birdfeeder from Damman Hardware, an annual pass to the Detroit Zoo, two admission tickets to Cranbrook Institute of Science, two day passes to Oakland County Parks, and a Nature Walk with our naturalist, Bob Muller, with free Slurpees from 7-Eleven afterwards.

Our next Nature Night was held March 30th at Starr Elementary. The evening was another success, with 100 students and parents attending. We had many of the same exhibits as last time, as well as a tank full of fish from the North American Native Fish Society. The fly-tying was a hit, and Steve was busy with a line of



as the many volunteers who made the Nature Nights possible. Moving forward, we would like to hold two of these programs every year, between January and March. If you are interested in having a Nature Night at your school, please contact Kristine Hammond at 248-577-5171.

# Royal Oaks Wild Side

BY BOB MULLER

## What's Happening in Cumingston Park and Tenhave Woods

By the time this Chinquapin is out most of the spring wild flower season will have passed on by. It started with spring beauty, trout lily and bloodroot starting to bloom by Easter weekend. As always, the trilliums were spectacular, the jack-in-the-pulpit intriguing and the wood poppy eye catching. The multitude of small flowers, the beds of mayapple and many interesting ferns brightened our parks. This change from winter to spring is always looked forward to. If you don't walk through the parks every four days this time of year, you will miss something as some



Trout Lily

flowers will be up and gone before you return.

Now that the leaves are back and the woods are green again, take a closer look at those leaves.

Often the unfurling of the leaves is almost as beautiful as the flowers. If you get a chance, watch a shagbark hickory with its red terminal buds just before they open. They look as if they are flower buds. The leaves over a week will put on an incredible display as they grow to almost a foot in length. In winter you can stand in the middle of either park and see how small they really are. But now with the leaves back, our parks offer something very

unusual in this city. Walk into either park. In just the time it takes you to walk one hundred feet you will feel you are miles from the city. This may simply be the most valuable thing about urban nature areas. They allow you to escape this crowded world we have created. Don't be fooled by the wall of green leaves. There are still many things to see if you look close. Walk the trails slowly and keep your eyes peeled. Little things that are happening come into view. Maybe you'll notice a green tulip tree flower petal on the forest floor letting you know the tree is flowering 70 feet above your head.

Now is the time to explore the real world and get away from the artificial one people have built. Escape the developed world, take a breath, feel the stress fade away and take a walk in the woods. Check out Royal Oak's wild side.

## Membership Notice

The Royal Oak Nature Society is asking for a minimum \$5 per year membership donation for an individual or family. A donation of \$10 or more will make you a supporting member. A membership, entitles you to have our newsletter, *The Chinquapin*, mailed to you four times a year. The mailing begins with the fall issue and ends with the summer one. When you

become a member and have missed any of the previous newsletters starting with the fall issue, please notify us at 248-246-3380 and we will mail them to you.

Your membership will help to cover the cost of printing and mailing of our newsletter and will also assist in funding educational programs that we provide.

Non-members are still welcome to come to our monthly speaker programs as well as our nature walks. Those programs and walks are, and always will be, free to anyone who enjoys learning about nature.

To become or to continue being a Nature Society member, please fill out the adjacent form. Donations are tax deductible.



## Want to Join The Royal Oak Nature Society?

Please make checks out to:

**CITY OF ROYAL OAK  
MEMO: ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY**

Mail completed form and donation check to:

**Royal Oak Nature Society  
1708 Northwood Blvd.  
Royal Oak, MI 48073**

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1-year membership rates: (Sept-Aug)

Individual/Family: \$5.00

Supporting: \$10 and up

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